

# The Impact of Social Media Use among Chinese College Students: A Literature Review of Academic Performance, Emotional Health, and Sleep Quality.

Tian Yuan, Emily Sarmiento

Angeles University Foundation, Angeles city, Philippines

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**Abstract:** Social networks have become integral to daily life, with billions of users worldwide. While social media offers networking and information-gathering benefits, its impact on psychological well-being raises various concerns. This study investigates the correlation between social media engagement and adverse health outcomes among young adults. Specifically, it examines the effects on depression, anxiety, and sleep irregularities. The research utilizes a quantitative design. The sample comes from a university in Hebei Province, China. Through calculation, 400 representatives are needed to represent the sample size. The study will also explore potential moderating factors such as age, gender, racial status, and socioeconomic status. Data will be analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics to identify patterns and correlations. Anticipated results include identifying social media usage patterns linked to adverse health outcomes and how demographic factors influence these effects. The findings aim to address research gaps and inform policies to mitigate social media's adverse impact on mental health.

**Keywords:** Social Media Usage; Mental Well-Being; Young Adults; Quantitative Approach; Demographic Factors; Mental Health Outcomes.

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## 1. Introduction

Nowadays Social media has become a major player in the fast-changing digital scene, drastically changing social interaction, knowledge exchange, and communication. With 4.9 billion active users globally (Khan et al., 2022), social media platforms have become an essential part of daily life for many different kinds of people and locations. Social media's allure is its capacity to connect people, share knowledge, and develop interest groups. Despite these benefits, concerns about social media's possible detrimental impacts on health, particularly mental and emotional well-being, have grown. Thus, this study seeks to quantify social media use's effects on emotional well-being and sleep quality.

Social media use is fast growing, however there is growing evidence that its advantages could be offset by its link with unfavourable health effects. Recent research has linked excessive social media use to depression, anxiety, self-harm, and suicide (Jang & Park, 2020). The CDC reports a 36% increase in suicides between 2000 and 2022. CDC (2023) reported 49,000. These worrying patterns suggest a relationship between social media use and mental health issues, requiring a more analysis of their underlying interactions.

There is a significant relationship between social media use and sleep quality. Research indicates that the longer adolescents and college students use social media before bed, the poorer their sleep quality tends to be (Alonzo et al., 2021). But Social media use and sleep quality by age, gender, and emotional well-being need further study. Previous research focused on broad correlations.

This study addresses this gap by examining university students' social media use, emotional well-being, and sleep quality. This study will offer a better knowledge of how these health outcomes vary among different student populations by using validated quantitative measures, therefore adding important data to the increasing corpus of research on the

effect of social media on health.

The study will understand how age, gender, and degree status affect social media activities is essential to creating customised therapies for different demographic groups. The research will focus on these links to inform public health campaigns and policy decisions to reduce social media's negative effects and maximize its benefits.

The study will explore the relationship among social media use to emotional well-being and sleep quality. The findings will inform evidence-based social media harm reduction and youth digital habits programs.

Researching the relationship between social media, academic performance, sleep quality, and emotional state is crucial for education administrators to understand how these factors interact within the educational system. By analyzing these connections, administrators can develop targeted strategies that directly enhance students' academic performance. The insights gained from this research not only help improve academic outcomes but also contribute to fostering a supportive environment that promotes students' overall well-being, including their mental health and social adaptability, ultimately creating a more effective and responsive educational system.

### 1.1. Background Information

Social media has now been a significant element of every individual's daily life, with over a billion users worldwide. The most distinguishing feature of the platform is that it is available everywhere in multimedia reporting, where peer connections, real-time information, and niche communities converge. Despite its potential advantages, studies show that it can be associated with some serious health issues, such as higher chances of depression, anxiety, and loneliness (Alo et al., 2023). Take, for example, the statistic for 2021, where approximately 12.3 million adults reported having thoughts of death by suicide, which followed the steady increase in the use of social media, (CDC, 2023). Social effects of social

media on health outcomes will be of particular emphasis on certain mental health measures, including sleep duration, sleep quality, and emotional health. Through awareness of these patterns, we can be more responsive to the possible risks associated with regular usage of social media platforms by different demographic groups.

In our locale, the adverse effects of social media on mental health are becoming increasingly serious. The widespread use of platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter has increased the exposure of people from all age groups to potential risks such as cyberbullying, comparison anxiety, and addiction (Lee et al., 2023). The research done at the local level has shown the link between the excessive use of social media and mental health problems. Thus, local leaders and health professionals encourage support for such links and provide awareness programs (Lee et al., 2023). Knowledge of these aspects is the key element of scientific research, which helps realize practical applications and protects the mental health of the people in our community.

## **2. Review of Related Literature**

### **2.1. Usage of Social Media:**

Usage of social media refers to the frequency, duration, and intensity with which an individual engages with social media platforms, including activities such as posting, commenting, liking, sharing content, and scrolling through feeds. This usage can be quantified by measuring the amount of time spent on social media per day or week, the number of interactions or engagements on these platforms.

### **2.2. Emotional Wellbeing**

Emotional well-being can be delineated based on multiple dimensions. Involves an individual's ability to regulate emotions, including how they manage and adjust their emotions to adapt to different environments and situations (Gross,1998). Secondly, emotional well-being is also related to an individual's subjective well-being, which includes aspects such as life satisfaction, self-acceptance, positive relationships with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth(Ryff,1989).

In summary, the operational definition of emotional well-being in the study can be encapsulated as a multidimensional concept that encompasses an individual's performance and abilities in emotional regulation, subjective well-being, and psychological health. These aspects collectively constitute the state of an individual's emotional well-being, reflecting how effectively they manage their emotions, maintain positive relationships, achieve personal goals, and sustain overall psychological health. It is operationalised under the Emotional Well-Being Scale (EWBS), which offers quantitative assessments for stress, anxiety, and depression.

### **2.3. Sleep Quality**

Sleep is commonly defined as a regular, recurring, and easily reversible state of the organism, characterized by a period of relative inactivity and a significant increase in the threshold for responding to external stimuli compared to the waking state (Kaplan and Sadock, 1988). Quality, on the other hand, refers to the level of excellence of something or its overall excellence (Oxford English Reference Dictionary, 1989). Consequently, sleep quality can be understood as the level of excellence in one's sleep. This concept has been assessed by numerous researchers based on this definition.

Through a review of literature, including previous questionnaires and studies, several key dimensions of sleep quality have been identified. These include sleep initiation, sleep maintenance, sleep depth, dreams, waking up after sleep, the condition upon waking, the impact on daily life, sleep duration, and overall satisfaction with sleep. It is operationalized under the Sleep Quality Scale (SQS), which provides quantitative assessments for sleep patterns, disturbances, and overall sleep quality.

### **2.4. Academic Performance**

Many important studies have explored the factors influencing college students' academic performance. These studies cover a wide range of aspects, from learning habits, skills, and attitudes to external and internal factors, as well as students' personality traits. Research (Credé & Kuncel,2008) shows that learning habits, skills, and attitudes are significant predictors of academic performance and have a strong correlation with students' GPA and individual course grades. In particular, learning motivation and learning skills exhibit the strongest relationship with students' GPA and individual course outcomes. Students' academic performance is influenced by various external and internal factors. For example, family issues, work and financial problems, social and other issues are considered external factors, while students' abilities and qualifications, class schedules, environment, study materials, and exam systems fall under internal factors (Hamid, 2019). Students' personality traits, such as self-control, are also associated with academic performance. High-achieving students differ significantly from low-achieving students in terms of overall self-control, impulsivity, risk-seeking behaviors, and other related traits(Mansfield et al,2004).

In conclusion, college students' academic performance is a complex phenomenon influenced by a wide range of factors, including but not limited to learning habits, skills and attitudes, external and internal factors, personality traits, and broader individual and societal environmental factors.

### **2.5. Correlation between Social Media Usage and Demographics**

Pessoa et al. (2023) studied Instagram usage and its relation to several health outcomes among young college students. It also specifies the correlation between different social media usage profiles with several demographic characteristics, including age, sex, and socioeconomic status of the user. It is inferred through the findings that Instagram can provide positive impacts for adopting healthy behaviors, but it has connotated negative impacts where the usage is excessive or unhealthy. This study is relevant to our research as it highlights that sociodemographic characteristics should be considered when assessing social media's effects on health outcomes.

### **2.6. Social Media use and Emotional Well-being**

Abiddine et al. (2022) conducted a study to establish the correlation between problematic social media use and subjective well-being among university students with insomnia as a moderator. Performed during the COVID-19 outbreak, this study focuses on the detrimental effects that higher social media use contributes to sleep disruption and, consequently, to health. The authors stress the importance of

focusing on the problem of sleep resulting from social media use to prevent negative effects. This work is notably relevant to our study as it gives an example of how unique health indicators like sleep quality are directly affected by the use of social media.

Gaspar and his research team (2023) adopted a biopsychosocial perspective to study the impact of High-Speed Networking (HSN) usage on adolescent subjective health. They pointed out that positive communication on Social Networking Sites (SNS) can benefit mental health by extending the 'buffer theory' and suggesting that moderate use of SNS benefits our well-being. It identifies constructive values for using social media, where the subject shows some healthy ways of using it. This research is relevant to our study given that it shows that SM use is not entirely negative; rather, its effects depend on the context and usage patterns on overall health.

Combined, these reviews inform the complex relationship between social media use and mental health, which depends on sleep quality and the context in which and why people use social media based on their socio demographic aspects. Nevertheless, they offer a premise upon which to build an understanding of how varying amounts and distribution of social media content impact mood and sleep in young adults.

## 2.7. Social Media use and Sleep Quality

Multiple studies have shown a significant correlation between social media use and students' sleep quality. For example, one study found that frequent use of Twitter on Sunday nights among college students was associated with poorer sleep quality. (Garrett, R. et al. 2018) social media usage before sleep might still negatively affect sleep quality (Kaimal, & Sasangohar, 2017).

Over the past decade, research has consistently shown that young adults' use of electronic media is associated with reduced overall sleep time and poorer sleep quality (Cain & Gradisar, 2010). More recent studies have found that increased social media usage is linked to higher rates of sleep disturbances (Levenson, Shensa, Sidani, Colditz, & Primack, 2016). Obsessive Facebook checking, which demands minimal cognitive effort, has also been connected to lower sleep quality (Mark, Wang, Niiya, & Reich, 2016). Research on Twitter has further demonstrated that tweet sentiments fluctuate throughout the day, influenced by people's sleep patterns and circadian rhythms (Golder & Macy, 2011).

Mobile phone addiction not only directly predicted adolescents' sleep quality but also indirectly predicted it through the mediating role of emotional balance; The direct effect of mobile phone addiction on sleep quality, as well as the mediating role of emotional balance, were both moderated by rumination. Individuals with higher levels of rumination experienced stronger direct and indirect effects compared to those with lower levels; The direct effect of mobile phone addiction on sleep quality and the mediating role of emotional balance were also moderated by mindfulness. Individuals with higher levels of mindfulness experienced weaker direct and indirect effects compared to those with lower levels (Liu, 2018).

## 2.8. Improved Sharing of Information

Social networking sites have been established to enhance social interaction and connectivity, mainly by adding comments, shares, and likes on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and WhatsApp, among other platforms. According to the

research accomplished by Petkovic et al. (2021), it was recommended that citizens could jointly help the campaigns, which entails fostering change in norms, culture, and behavior (p.13). Social media, although posing health risks to users by aggravating the prevalence of anxiety, depression, and cyberbullying, has enabled social learning and provided opportunities for the formation of social networks to some extent.

## 2.9. Social Media and Adverse Health Outcomes

A study by Alonzo et al. (2019) explains that the increase in social media use among young people has heightened adverse health outcomes such as several mental-related problems (p.1). The majority of youths spend too much time on social media, which resonates with inadequate sleep patterns and exposes them to poor mental health outcomes.

## 2.10. Social Media use and Academic Performance

The impact of social media use on academic performance is also a key focus of research. Some studies have found a positive correlation between social media use and academic performance (Mosharrafa, 2024). One study indicated that social media use significantly improved academic performance. However, other research suggests that social media use may negatively affect academic performance by causing distraction and reducing motivation. This indicates that the effect of social media use may depend on how individuals manage and utilize these platforms.

## 2.11. Cyberbullying and Online Harassment

Huang et al. (2021) reported in their study that cyberbullying on social media against adolescents is on the rise in society. The majority of offenders target online games because they understand that the target victims since these games attract a large number of players. Huang and the team argues that these online games pose numerous abuses and harassment to the unsuspected audience, particularly adolescents.

In their research, Schivinski and his team (2020) explored the reasons that trigger social media use and their connections with psychological well-being, self-esteem, and problematic behavior patterns. Their report also discloses the relationship between various social media drivers and an individual's mental health. While it is essential to look at these interconnections, they also provide clues into what factors lead to problematic social media use that can eventually affect mental health.

Stănculescu and Griffiths (2022) used latent profile analysis to study various cohorts who display different patterns of social media addiction. The study specifically determined the different sociodemographic factors that lead to addiction to social media, which include gender, age, and social anxiety. Through this study, the researchers discovered that these figures must be uncovered by looking at the detailed nuances of the multifaceted nature of social media addiction and its contributing factors. These discoveries are significant for incorporating interventions for social media's harmful use and implied negative consequences.

Tandon et al. (2021), meanwhile, explored the mental states and conducts that develop because of the fear of missing out (FoMO) people have due to their social media use at their jobs. The research's concentration on workers' emotional and

performance outcomes considering FoMO makes it apparent how this social networking technology can affect clients' and team members' performance and well-being. The research results illustrate the significance of identifying FoMO-related problems and, hence, finding suitable strategies for individuals' healthy media usage habits and team members' well-being to mitigate the mentioned adverse effects on individuals' mental and physical health and work performance.

### 2.12. Conceptual Framework

First, the use of social media has a significant impact on students' sleep quality. Research shows that passive social media use has a positive predictive effect on the sleep quality of graduate students, and this effect is mediated by perceived stress (Yang & Lin, 2018). Additionally, studies on the impact of social support on college students' sleep quality indicate that anxiety and worry serve as multiple mediators between social support and sleep quality.

(Guo & Wu, 2014). These findings suggest that social media use may indirectly affect sleep quality by influencing individuals' stress levels and anxiety, which in turn may impact academic performance.

Second, the impact of social media use on emotional well-being cannot be ignored. Ding and Zhou (2016) pointed out that Social media use significantly predicts college students'

social media dependency, with positive self-presentation serving as a partial mediator. Another study found that social media use has a direct positive predictive effect on adolescents' subjective well-being, while self-esteem mediates different types of identity formation pathways, with varying effects on subjective well-being. These results suggest that social media use may indirectly influence academic performance by affecting individuals' emotional well-being and self-perception (Ni & Shao, 2019).

However, some studies have pointed out a negative correlation between social media use and academic performance. For example, one study shows that social media use is negatively correlated with academic self-efficacy and academic performance, and academic self-efficacy mediates the negative relationship between social media use and life satisfaction (Hassell & Sukalich, 2016).. This suggests that social media use may negatively affect academic performance by reducing academic self-efficacy beliefs.

In summary, the relationship between social media use and academic performance is complex, involving multiple mediating and moderating variables. Sleep quality and emotional well-being may be important mediators connecting social media use and academic performance, while factors such as stress, anxiety, self-presentation, and social support may act as moderators influencing this process.

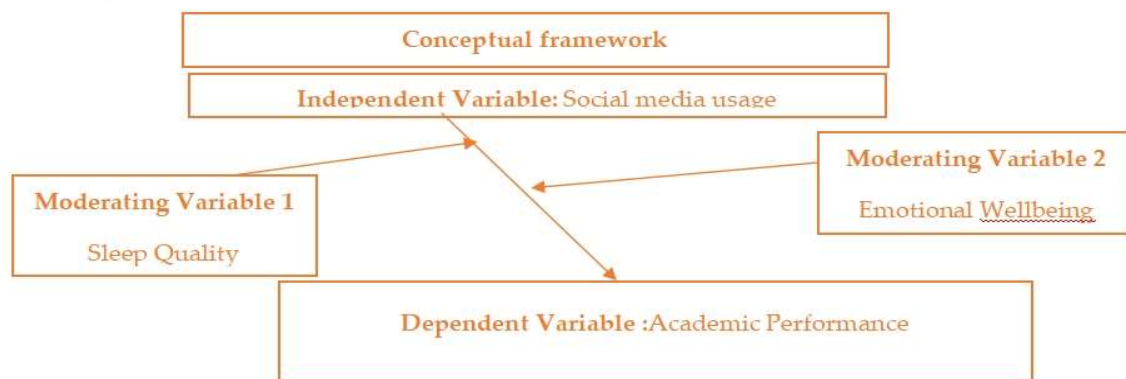


Figure 1. social support may act as moderators influencing this process

### 3. Future Research Perspectives

Despite the existence of extensive research on the link between social media usage and health outcomes, certain knowledge gaps still have to be addressed. These existing studies mainly cover the general population instead of the specific demographic groups, like adolescents. They are found to be inaccurate because the target individuals of social media are similar, affecting young people with diminished sensitivity that could result in worse conditions (Alonzo et al., 2019). Secondly, although several studies stress that there is a relationship between social media use and adverse mental health outcomes, they do not always agree on the mechanisms that produce this effect. Realization of these mechanisms is critical to devising intervention programs and preventive strategies. The majority of research investigating depression has been based on self-reported data, which may contain discrepancies and inaccuracies. Introducing an objective dimension to the inquiry at hand, such as physiological markers or observational behaviors, allows us to study the association between social media and health with more of a critical approach.

Additionally, literature evidence needs to be more

frequently sufficient regarding sociodemographic characteristics that give more magnanimous urgency to the link between social media use and risk to health. The risk factors attributed to gender, socioeconomic status, and culture may affect users invariably by making them vulnerable to the harmful effects of social media, for instance. In conclusion, there remains a gap in the research that probes into the interaction of these factors and the health effects of social media use, especially among adolescents.

While cyberbullying and harassment online are seen as considerable issues in the realm of social media, there is a remarkable research gap on the level and effect of it among adolescents, in particular. Acquiring knowledge about the mechanisms of cyberbullying and the connection of the same with mental health outcomes is of utmost importance. Consequently, this bank of knowledge should be a reasonable basis for designing proper interventions that could potentially alleviate the ill effects of cyberbullying.

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